



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TULSA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CRACK COCAINE CONSPIRACY

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Tulsa, Okla., man pleaded guilty in federal court today to participating in a conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine in Jasper County, Mo.

Israel D. Ward, 29, Tulsa, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr this afternoon to the charges contained in a Sept. 12, 2002, federal indictment. Prior to today's guilty plea, the court granted the government's motion to dismiss two counts of that indictment related to the murders of Paris Harbin and Chandy Bresee-Plumb that occurred in Joplin in 1999.

By pleading guilty today, **Ward** admitted that he participated in a conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine in Jasper County between September 1998 and December 2000.

Ward came to Joplin from Tulsa in August 1998 and began assisting others in the manufacture and distribution of crack cocaine, Graves said. **Ward** would cook powder cocaine into crack cocaine for distribution by himself and others. The crack cocaine, Graves said, was kept and sold at several different locations in Joplin, including 2116 Grand. **Ward** also assisted co-conspirators by transporting them to Tulsa to obtain powder cocaine, which was subsequently transformed into crack cocaine before being distributed.

Under federal statutes, **Ward** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in federal prison without parole, up to life imprisonment, plus a fine up to \$4 million. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

Ward is the sixth co-defendant to plead guilty in this case.

* **Larry Darnell Saddler**, also known as Laughin' Larry, 47, of Carterville, Mo., pleaded guilty on Dec. 6, 2004, to managing a residence at 2116 Grand in Joplin, which he made available from April 1999 to January 2000 for the purpose of unlawfully distributing crack cocaine. **Saddler** admitted that he made the residence available to co-defendants, and that sales of at least 50 grams but less than 150 kilograms of crack cocaine occurred in several locations within the residence and also outside the residence.

* **Justin L. Triplett**, 30, of Joplin, pleaded guilty on May 12, 2004, to his role in the conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. **Triplett** admitted that others involved in the conspiracy traveled to Tulsa, Okla., to obtain crack cocaine, which they distributed to **Triplett** when they returned to Joplin. **Triplett** then distributed crack cocaine to other individuals. The total amount of crack cocaine attributable to **Triplett** during the course of the conspiracy, Graves said, is between 150 and 500 grams.

* **Ernesto V. Bell**, also known as Stone, 30, who is currently in federal custody, pleaded guilty on Dec. 16, 2002, to participating in the conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. On February 2, 2000, **Bell** sold approximately one gram of crack cocaine to a confidential informant in two separate transactions, Graves said. On February 29, 2000, after a vehicle chase involving law enforcement officers, **Bell** was arrested and found in possession of a quantity of crack cocaine, money and a loaded Steyr 9mm handgun. According to Graves, the total amount of crack cocaine attributable to **Bell** in the course of the conspiracy is at least 150 grams but less than 500 grams.

* **Brian L. McDaniel**, also known as Barrion, 30, who is currently in federal custody, pleaded guilty on Dec. 6, 2002, to participating in the conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. **McDaniel** admitted that he engaged in the distribution of crack cocaine in and around the Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Joplin, Mo., areas as a member of the Tulsa area Red Mob Gangsters street gang, from July 1999 through July 2001. On Dec. 9, 1999, **McDaniel** sold approximately one gram of crack cocaine to a confidential informant, Graves said. On different occasions, Graves added, law enforcement officers seized quantities of crack cocaine, drug paraphernalia and cash from two homes that were used by **McDaniel** to store and distribute drugs and money. When a search warrant was executed in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on July 8, 2001, officers found **McDaniel** in possession of crack cocaine and cash. According to Graves, the total amount of crack cocaine attributable to **McDaniel** is at least 500 grams but less than 1.5 kilograms.

* **Victoria Gonzalez**, 28, of Carthage, pleaded guilty on May 6, 2002, to her role in the conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. **Gonzalez** received quantities of crack cocaine from a co-defendant and an associate of his, which she in turn distributed to various individuals. From approximately June, 2000, to December, 2000, **Gonzalez** engaged in a series of crack cocaine transactions with an undercover police officer, selling crack cocaine at her residence in Carthage.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David Rush. It was investigated by the Joplin, Mo., Police Department, the Jasper County Drug Task Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Joplin Area Major Case Squad, the Tulsa, Okla., Police Department, the Missouri State Highway

Patrol, the Jasper County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Newton County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, COMET (the Combined Ozarks Multi-jurisdictional Enforcement Team), and the Springfield, Mo., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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